

# **Chard Regeneration Scheme Update Report**

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## **Purpose of the Report**

This report updates members of Area West Committee on the Chard Regeneration Scheme project.

## **Public Interest**

South Somerset District Council has worked with partners to develop an ambitious strategy which will bring significant changes and benefits to Chard and the community. Chard Regeneration Scheme encompasses the town centre with a focus on redeveloping and bringing in to community use the Boden Mill site. Following consultation in summer 2018, the proposed components to be included on the site are a new leisure centre with swimming pool, a library and community hub, alongside a blend of housing and commercial developments.

The project team appointed by the Council and working with the partners includes Alliance Leisure (leisure development specialist), AHR architects and Speller Metcalfe. It is intended that the Chard Regeneration Scheme will make a significant, positive difference to the economic vitality of the local area. It will be of interest to all who live, work, study, shop, use the services and enjoy the leisure opportunities within the town.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Area West Committee note the content of this report.

## **Background**

Following detailed design, SSDC applied in May 2019 for Planning Consent and Listed Building Consent to build a new Leisure Centre, Library & Community Hub and public realm improvements at the Boden Mill (ACI site) in Chard. The proposal requires the removal of buildings associated with the factory site but the retention of the Mill, Building 11, the listed arch and some adjoining buildings to the south of the arch. The planning application was heard by both SSDC's Area West Committee and then Regulation Committee on 3 September 2019 where it received approval.

## **Project Update**

### **Demolition:**

Works to demolish the existing factory buildings commenced in November 2019 following removal of all asbestos based materials. The demolition works progressed swiftly and the buildings on site were substantially removed by the Christmas break. The remaining section of the structure being removed in the new year along with the ground floor slabs of the buildings. During the demolition process all

elements of the factory structure were detached from building 11, this returned the building back to a detached structure for the first time in over a century.

The demolition phase of works ran smoothly thanks to the skill and care demonstrated by the demolition contractor. The process was continually monitored and to date we have received only positive feedback from local residents.

The next stage of the works covering the detailed design and engineering of the foundations is being progressed by the Council's partners, Alliance Leisure. Orders have been raised to allow this phase of works to get under way prior to the main construction contract being signed. This should allow the project to progress to the timeframes in the project programme, working towards completion in August 2021.

### **Planning:**

The project team continue to work on the discharge of the last outstanding planning conditions. We will need to maintain an open dialogue with the planning team as aspects of the materials and detail design may be subject to change. These changes are intended to keep the project costs within budget. An example of a minor amendment of this type would be the substitution of the metal cladding on the external rear wall for a render finish.

### **Master Plan:**

The residential component of the regeneration scheme is now under consideration. The first actions will be to survey the historic mill buildings in detail to allow the cost of conversion to be thoroughly assessed.

In order to better understand the appetite for the commercial elements of phase two the Property Team have commenced marketing of the various commercial spaces. Demand information gained from this exercise will be fed back into the project to influence what type and what size of commercial space will be most suitable for the local market.

### **High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)**

The final programme design document was submitted to Historic England for the High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) programme in December. This has now been through a rigorous assessment by Historic England's south west regional team. Throughout late January/early February they will be carrying out a national appraisal of the programme designs to ensure they meet the overall aims of the High Streets HAZ programme and any further questions or areas of concern raised by the regional teams will be looked at in more detail. SSDC will be notified of the outcome of our programme design in late March following agreement with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. During the period between now and March, the project team are continuing to develop the community engagement plan. Notification of grant will be announced in the spring when the amount being awarded will be confirmed. South Somerset District Council applied for £1m which will be match funded. The funds will be used to support a programme including four public realm projects, shop front improvements and community engagement activities.

A full time project officer will be appointed by the spring to oversee the programme and the recruitment process is currently underway. The regeneration team are working with consultants to develop detailed designs of the public realm projects and will consult with key stakeholders in the coming months. A shop front design guide will be produced as part of the programme to support the refurbishment grants. SSDC

are hosting an event for building owners, local businesses and shops on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February at the Guildhall in Chard from 5.30pm until 7.00pm to explain the programme in more detail.

### **Next Steps**

Now that the demolition works are complete, construction work will shortly commence for the leisure centre and associated public realm. The phase one construction target completion date is summer 2021. Whilst phase one construction is ongoing, the project team will be preparing a planning application for phase 2 and implementing some of the softer interventions as part of the wider Chard Regeneration Scheme programme. This includes support to attract artisan / independent retailers to the town, support to develop the growth of local food producers and food businesses, and undertaking a market health check in partnership with the Town Council.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no new financial implications directly associated with this report.

### **Council Plan Implications**

The Chard Regeneration Scheme is a specific objective of the Council Plan and a priority project for 2019/20.

### **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

None at this stage

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

None

### **Background Papers**

None

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